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INTERMOUNTAIN REGION FOREST PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



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Forest Plan Implementation



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From the REGIONAL FORESTER...

Changes have been taking place within the Forest Service. An important one is that the National Forest land and resource planning process has changed both what we know about the land and how we manage the land.

Still, the mission of the Forest Service remains the same:

Caring for the land and serving people

As Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, knew, if we care for the land, we will be serving the people. So we are really working for all the people when we develop our land and resource management plans for each National Forest and when we make individual decisions about activities or projects.

Just as our mission is the same, Gifford Pinchot's ideals can still guide us as we manage the day to day work in every National Forest. Each day we should be asking ourselves key questions:

- **How do our proposed activities match our vision of how the forest will look in the future?**
- **What issues most worry members of the public when the Forest Service proposes a project or activity?**
- **How can members of the public be involved in our land management process even though they may differ with us over how we should manage the land?**
- **What can we do to guarantee healthy and productive forests for decades to come?**

These questions are not easy to answer. But the people we serve should, at the very least, understand the rationale behind our answers and our resulting decisions. In turn, we need to show them that we understand the logic and motivation behind their objections and worries. We also need to recognize that our decisions are not always right even though we have to make them.

Wise management of an individual forest is a partnership between the public and the Forest Service. Our individual Forest plans have grown out of this partnership, so as we implement the plans activity by activity, we should continue to foster a cooperative spirit. Each of us and each member of the public has a stake in helping the Forest Service fulfill its mission of caring for the land and serving the people.

There are many great interests on the National Forests which sometimes conflict a little. They must all be made to fit into one another so that the machine runs smoothly as a whole. It is often necessary for one man to give way a little here, another a little there. But by giving way a little at present they both profit by it a great deal in the end.

—Gifford Pinchot

FOREST SERVICE PEOPLE . . .

. . . are an important resource

Each person in the Intermountain Region is important. With each person's dedication and commitment, we can successfully implement our individual Forest Plans. We can and must trust the integrity of our associates, respect their feelings, and treat them with the personal warmth that we ourselves would appreciate.



. . . are good neighbors

To be good neighbors, we must first become better acquainted with the people we serve, and we must work to respect their feelings and opinions. Like any good neighbor, we should share the best we have to offer—person to person—as we work to manage the National Forests.

. . . work together as a team

Just as teamwork in today's complex and specialized world is a necessity, teamwork is essential in the managing of an individual Forest. Every Forest plan reflects Forest Service teamwork. Through teamwork, we have the best Forest land management plans we have ever had, and through future teamwork, we will implement these plans carefully and wisely.





MULTIPLE USE . . .

. . . through an integrated resource approach

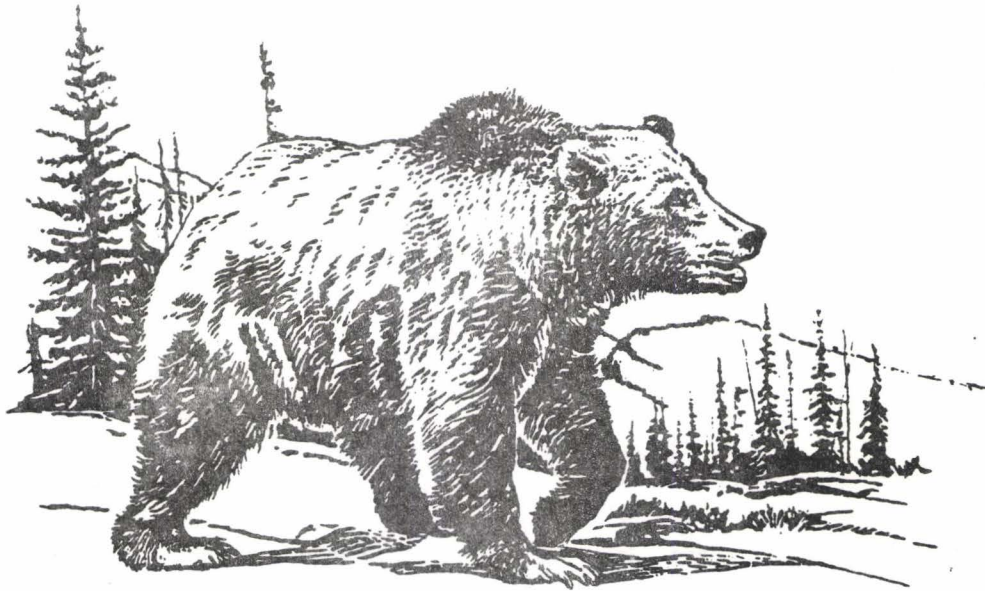
Multiple use requires that the land manager skillfully balance competing demands for the available land and resources in the National Forests. All of us—employees of the Forest Service and members of the public—have to work together if we want to make Forest plans a success and a reality on the land.

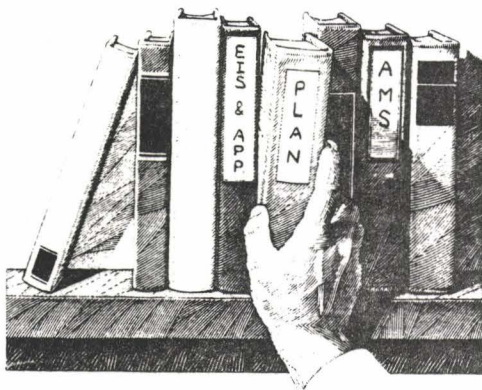
. . . through conservation leadership and land stewardship

Each member of the Forest Service, from our newest employee to the Regional Forester, must be a leader in the conservation and stewardship of the land. We must protect the unique environment of the National Forests, while we work to manage and enhance Forest values. We must fulfill the future vision established in the Forest plans.

... by being better

Better stewardship is only possible if we use our initiative to improve. Balancing resources is difficult, and more efficient work practices don't happen without a struggle. But we have to do what we can to lower costs and increase the benefits that we all expect to receive from the National Forests. Better doesn't necessarily mean bigger. It does mean that we use our initiative to profit from our mistakes and to enhance our successes. A rapid application of research results will improve our productivity and effectiveness. Also, innovative cooperation with other agencies, industries, organizations, and volunteer efforts will guarantee both speedy and better results.





FOREST PLANS

Today's Forest plans mark the first time in the history of the Forest Service that we have documented people's goals and objectives in a comprehensive plan for every National Forest.

In the past, the public, rangers, and supervisors all had visions of how each Forest should look in decades to come, but seldom were such visions ever documented. Today's Forest plans capture these visions and guide future decisions so that the visions translate into an attainable reality.

In the past, we planned project by project. Plans for a single project tried to include all possible options, but such breadth was unrealistic, even impossible. Each option required time-consuming and exhaustive analysis. Even worse, options within the project area affected nearby areas in unpredictable ways, so cumulative forestwide impacts were impossible to assess.

Today's Forest plans address planning options for the entire forest, not for an isolated project area. Given their breadth, Forest plans can show the public and the decisionmakers what trade-offs exist between resources. For example, will the development of more hiking trails and new roads have an impact on wildlife? on nearby motel and resort owners? on water quality in streams? As this example shows, every resource and activity on or near a forest affects every other. So Forest plans have to be as comprehensive as possible.

Today's Forest plans are the best planning documents we have ever had. Now we have to fulfill their promise through excellent implementation.

FOREST PLAN DIRECTION

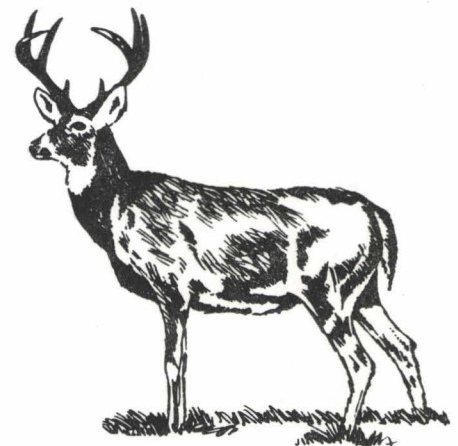
The Forest plan direction is summarized in four separate, but interrelated, components:

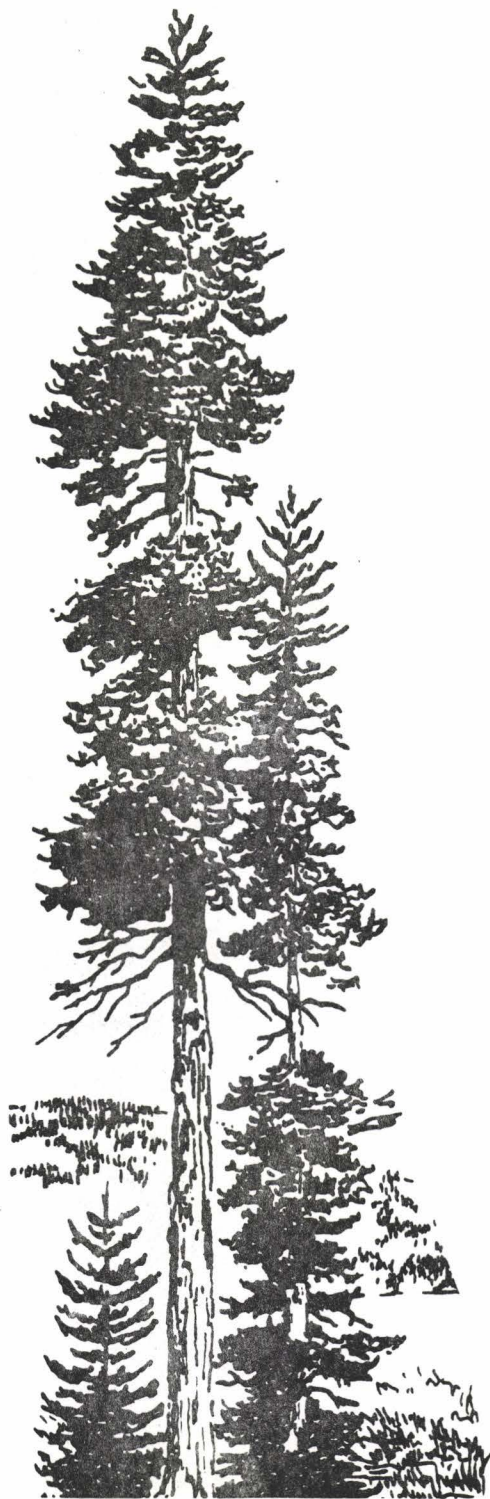
- **Goals**
- **Objectives**
- **Standards**
- **Guidelines**

Goals are developed forestwide and for each management area identified in the plan. An example of a management area goal is to provide forage and cover on winter ranges for big game.

Objectives are levels of goods and services, such as improving 5,000 acres of wildlife habitat each year between 1986 and 1990.

Standards and guidelines are established either by management area or on a forestwide basis. They specify the acceptable limits of change which can occur. A typical standard and guideline would be to maintain big game forage and cover by having at least 30 percent of an area in natural or created openings.





FOREST PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To implement a Forest plan requires teamwork—between all levels of the Forest Service, between landowners, miners, and outfitter guides, between any concerned member of the public and the Forest Service.

All of these people need to understand how the Forest Service will be using the Forest plans to make timely and cost-effective management decisions. Through the Forest plans, members of the public (and even Forest Service employees) can check to see how and why the Forest Service is planning a particular project. Forest plans allow each person to compare the existing situation with the likely future condition once a project is completed.

During project or project area analysis, district rangers identify site specific issues, opportunities, and concerns. This identification process—called scoping—ensures that the project area and project activities are consistent with the project purpose. Scoping is a vital step in most Forest Service projects—for example, trail maintenance in wilderness, development of a ski area, protection of watersheds, or the expansion of a campground.

Only a limited number of projects (and accompanying sites) can be scheduled in a single year. So projects and sites should be those that provide the best opportunities to meet Forest plan goals and objectives; to resolve site specific issues, opportunities, and concerns; and to work toward the desired future condition of the Forest. The selection and prioritization of projects depend on these factors:

- The current condition of the area is significantly different from the desired future condition described in the Forest plan.
- The area presents the best opportunity to meet Forest plan goals and objectives. For example, the area in-

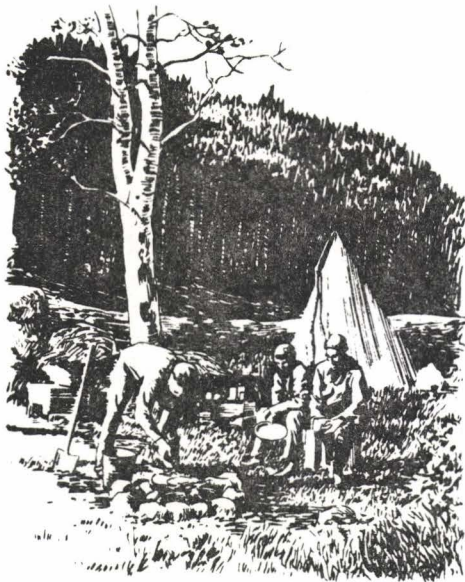
cludes major projects which could be implemented in the next three to five years as proposed in the Forest plan appendices.

- Major site specific issues, opportunities, and concerns need to be resolved for the area, or through implementation of the project.
- The implementation schedules are already included in the Forest plan.

This selection process relies heavily on the discretion of the district ranger. For example, some areas of the Forest may be very close to already achieving the desired future condition and are, therefore, given a lower priority for implementation. Other areas that are a long way from achieving the desired future condition would be given a higher priority.

How to get from a Forest Plan to a completed project . . .

- Step 1** **Analyze and design projects to meet the desired future condition and still stay within anticipated budgets.**
- Step 2** **Execute projects and proposals.**
- Step 3** **Monitor and evaluate effects on desired future conditions.**
- Step 4** **Amend or revise the Forest Plan, if needed.**



Step 1

Analyze and design projects to meet the desired future condition and still stay within anticipated budgets.

Some projects are already identified and even tentatively scheduled in the Forest plan. Examples would be timber sales or recreational facilities such as trails and boat landings. Other projects arise from developing needs: road maintenance when a road washes out, a request for permission to site a microwave relay station somewhere on the Forest, or the construction of road gates to protect terrain and wildlife habitat from vehicle damage.

All projects—whether scheduled or not—receive interdisciplinary analysis. As soon as a project arises, the Forest Service appoints an interdisciplinary (ID) team to analyze its scope and seriousness. The ID team initially identifies the future conditions already laid out in the Forest plan. These conditions become a benchmark for judging the various project options or alternatives open to the team.

Preliminary scoping and public involvement are used to identify public issues and management concerns. Individuals, organizations, and agencies affected by proposed activities are then notified that the Forest Service is considering a certain project.

The ID team next estimates the effects and judges the feasibility of the project in light of the desired future conditions (as established in the Forest plan), the seriousness of agency or public issues, and the significance of environmental consequences. Future conditions are considered because the Forest Service is more and more concerned about long-term cumulative effects on such things as stream channel stability, visual quality standards, or habitat diversity. The team also completes an economic analysis of the project and its alternatives to guarantee that they have analyzed the most cost-efficient approach.

Finally, the preferred treatment and accompanying management actions are identified. This preferred treatment or action may actually involve modifying the amount, timing,

or location of treatments or actions. Emergency actions, such as fire suppression or windthrow timber salvage, also need to be responded to within the guidelines of the Forest plan.

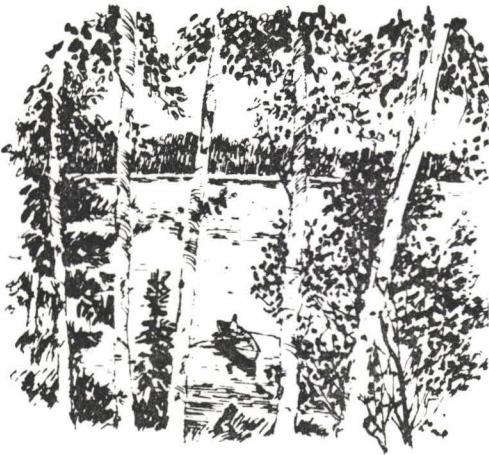
The Documentation of the Analysis

The foregoing analysis process arises from the legal requirements of the the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. NEPA's key requirement is, however, one of disclosure. Once the analysis is finished, the Forest Service is obligated to decide how it should disclose the consequences and attendant trade-offs:

- **An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).** The ID team prepares an EIS when the projected impacts of a project are significant enough that they need careful disclosure.
- **An Environmental Assessment (EA).** An EA is a limited document that both discloses the impacts and supports the Forest Service's legal decision that these impacts are not significant.
- **A Categorical Exclusion.** For projects whose impacts are very minimal and unlikely to be significant, the Forest Service can declare that they are categorically excluded from any documentation. Actually, the Forest Service may choose to publicize some categorically excluded projects if they are likely to be of interest to members of the public.

Once the NEPA ID team has finished both the analysis and the required disclosure documentation, Forest Service managers have to make a decision on the project. This decision is then documented in a Record of Decision for an EIS or a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impacts for an EA. These decision documents, in conjunction with decisions in Forest plans, are especially important because they alone of all the project documentation contain the rationale for the final decision to implement the project.





Step 2 **Execute projects and proposals.**

Program budgeting begins once the NEPA analysis and documentation are completed. Budgeting means that the Forest Service manager schedules upcoming projects as part of the 3-year program of activities.

The 3-year program schedule is, however, changed to accommodate Forest plan objectives, overall cost effectiveness, current budget allocations, and changing public issues. From this 3-year schedule, each Forest develops its annual program budget.

District rangers are primarily responsible for project execution. They choose work crews and contractors; they negotiate contract or project requirements; and they monitor the work of contractors to see that they have complied with the necessary safety and environmental requirements.

Typical projects (ones generated from within the Forest Service) include these:

- Campground, trail, and road construction
- Vegetation treatments, such as timber sales
- Watershed restoration
- Land acquisitions
- Campground operation and maintenance
- Trail maintenance
- Range allotment administration and improvement
- Special use permit administration
- Road maintenance
- Mineral leasing recommendations

Forest Supervisors and rangers also need to be timely in bringing all permits, easements, leases, and mineral operating plans—both existing and new—into compliance with the Forest plan prescriptions, standards, and guidelines.

All projects, whether internal or external, have to comply with the standards and guidelines in the Forest plan.

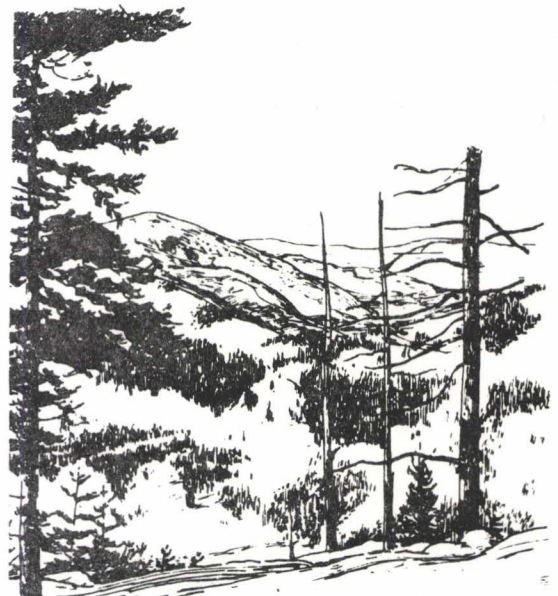
Step 3 Monitor and evaluate effects on desired future conditions.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential for the successful implementation of the Forest plan. This step tells the Forest manager if projects and activities are going as they should. The manager must know if the National Forest Management Act and NEPA commitments are being met.

Desired future conditions, as defined in the Forest plan, are the key to monitoring. They are the gauge for success.

Of course, changes or updates will occur as original Forest plan assumptions and conclusions are called into question because no vision of the future is ever finished.

Finally, monitoring of public opinion and public needs is essential if the Forest Service is to be constantly responsive to the needs of its various publics.





Step 4

Amend or revise the Forest Plan, if needed.

Amendments and revisions of the Forest plan will be made based upon what was revealed through the monitoring and evaluation process (step 3).

There are two kinds of Forest plan amendments: significant and non-significant. Significant amendments are changes that have an important effect on the entire plan or that affect a large portion of the planning area. Examples of significant amendments are when the long-term relationship of goods and services originally projected by the plan changes or when proposed budgets and implementation schedules are significantly affected by actual appropriations.

Non-significant amendments are changes that do not fit the preceding criteria. Examples of non-significant amendments are adjustments of management area boundaries or prescriptions, the consideration of projects and activities not included in the plan where the change is minor, short-term fluctuations in schedules and output, and minor changes in standards and guidelines.

Both types of amendments require NEPA compliance and appropriate public involvement.

Revision of the plan is a major effort and is required every 10 to 15 years. Revision could occur sooner if situations change that would significantly affect the goals and uses of the entire forest.

Looking to the Future

Today's Forest plans are just the beginning. They are the best we have ever had, but they could be better. So as we work to implement them and, as appropriate, amend or even revise them, let's remember that we are today's custodians of the National Forests, not their owners.

The Forest plans are, therefore, merely the latest and best tool for us to use as we endeavor to preserve the National Forests for the next generation and the generations after that. As custodians and conservationists, we must never forget that what we do today must be measured against what happens in the future.

When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

—Aldo Leopold, "A Sand County Almanac"



